



Fig. 1. January-June mean surface temperature relative to 1951-1980 mean.

June 2022 Temperature Update & The Bigger Picture

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It's hot and getting hotter. The first six months of the year are about 0.2°C cooler than the first six months of 2016 and 2020 (Fig. 1), but that's only because the current La Nina continues to cool the tropics. Global temperature is rising despite the La Nina. Earth is out of energy balance (more solar energy absorbed than heat radiated to space) by an astounding amount – more than any time with reliable data – so, within a few years, we will be setting new global temperature records.

Let us remind you of the big picture, so as to put yesterday's big news in perspective. The big news was not that there seems to be a political deal in Washington for actions that will reduce U.S. CO₂ emissions significantly, making our emissions closer to those of Europeans, who emit less than half as much CO₂ per capita as Americans. Such reduction is useful and overdue. It is consistent with the long-standing “wishful thinking” approach to climate policy – ask each nation to try to reduce their emissions and hope that the global results will add up to a solution. And then ignore the blatant scientific data showing that this approach is not working and will not work.

It's sobering to realize that it is almost 30 years since Clinton and Gore were elected in 1992 and 14 years since Obama and Biden were elected in 2008. Where would we be now if a climate policy based on science had been adopted in 1992 or even 2008? There is no use in crying over spilled milk, but there may be merit in relating an anecdote from 2008. It exposes the fundamental problem and helps explain why a second item in yesterday's news (one that received much less attention) is the actual big news and potentially the first step toward a solution of the climate problem.

“I can't get one vote for that.” Those words still ring in my (JEH's) ears. In December of 2008, I wrote a letter to President-elect Obama with two recommendations: (1) carbon tax and 100% dividend (name changed to “fee and dividend” months later), (2) support for modern nuclear power as the complement to renewable energy (otherwise it would be fossil fuels, mainly gas, with fracking, CO₂ and CH₄). A rising carbon fee is the essential requirement to solve the climate problem. Obama could have included a carbon fee in the economic package to deal with the global financial crisis (which Congress had to support), but he did not. If he had, economists agree that U.S. emissions could have been reduced 30 percent in a decade, and today we would have excess fossil fuel capacity, enough to cover Europe's needs. Instead, Obama pursued separate legislation, which Senator John Kerry was supposed to shepherd through Congress.

In early 2009 I met with Senator Kerry to advocate fee and dividend. He listened and agreed with the merits, but his verdict was: “I can't get one vote for that.”¹ Instead, the Democrats pursued a

“cap-and-trade” scheme, the Waxman/Markey bill, with more than 3000 pages of giveaways to every lobbyist who could raise his arm to write a paragraph or page. On the train ride back to New York, I read that there were 4 fossil fuel lobbyists in Washington for every Congress-person.

The public understands that Washington has become a swamp of special interests. The public knows that, upon election, congress-people become elite, concerned about maintaining that status, and willing to accept money from special interests. In short, our government is corrupt. Special interests have more clout in Washington than a person who comes without money. I could give some amusing stories about coming without money, but I presume that you already understand Washington’s corruption. This corruption explains more than the failure to fundamentally address climate. It also helps explain our excessive military adventures overseas and deterioration of our standing around the world – we are no longer the “shining city on the hill” that we seemed to be at the end of World War II.

Chapter 50, the final chapter of *Sophie’s Planet*, advises young people to take charge of their future by supporting a third political party. The first plank in the party’s platform must be a resolution to take no money from special interests. *Sophie’s Planet* is still not published but these matters are discussed on pages 31-32 of “[A Realistic Path to a Bright Future](#),” a communication sent out 3 December 2021. Reaction to that communication included incredulity that young people would be able to take charge of their own future. It is plausible. Yesterday’s most important news concerned the creation of a [third political party](#) in the United States. Young people should work to assure that the party suits their purposes, most crucially that the party takes no money from special interests.

Other suggestions for platform planks are discussed in *Bright Future* and *Sophie’s Planet*, but one matter deserves mention now: bipartisan blaming of our problems on China. China is not the main cause of climate change – we are – and China is not the cause of the special-interest swamp in Washington. We must work with China to preserve our planet.² If we get our house in order, we will do fine in competition with and cooperation with China.

¹ Draft Chapter 44 of *Sophie’s Planet*, [Tell the President the Whole Truth](#).

² Draft Chapter 47 of *Sophie’s Planet*, [China and the Global Solution](#).